

The Liberal Peace Argument in the Middle East: Ali in Wonderland or Crude (Oil) Reality?

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Abstract: The liberal peace argument makes a strong case for its theoretical argument and empirical findings that democracy and economic development are conducive to peace. However, little attention has been paid to Middle East peace and conflict from this perspective. Based on theory and empirical studies from the liberal peace tradition, this study looks into the correlates of conflict in the Middle East and compares them to their global counterparts. Research on resource dependent states show that oil has been more a curse than a blessing, both when it comes to economic development and democratization. Has this exceptional blend of circumstances also created a unique Middle Eastern recipe for conflict? Using international and domestic conflict as the independent variable, simple bivariate and logistic regression analysis is used to examine the correlation between interstate and intrastate armed conflict and the independent variables regimetype, economic development, trade, oil export, military expenditures and religion. Due to the study's limited time-period and number of observations, the findings were few. However, economic development recurred as a strong and consistent variable positively related to peace. Countries with a high level of oil-export were at a higher risk of being involved in conflict. More accountable and liberal Middle Eastern regimes would be of central importance to the region's stability. Nevertheless, the emergence of a Middle Eastern liberal peace, on both dyadic, national and interstate levels, belongs to the realm of the optimistic future.

The author is currently a graduate student at the University of Oslo, and will be using this paper as a starting point for a cand.polit thesis. The research is in an early stage and the findings are preliminary. Comments and suggestions are warmly welcome: mirjam@prio.no

1. Introduction

Many are the social scientists who research and theorize on the correlates of conflict and conditions conducive to peace. With theory based on writers from Immanuel Kant to Bruce M. Russett, and numerous empirical studies, the liberal peace argument makes a convincing case for its claim that trade, economic development and democracy leads to peace.

The liberal peace argument claims universal validity. However, peace and conflict in the Middle East does not intuitively seem to fit into the liberal peace perspective. The very limited numbers of democratic regimes makes it virtually impossible to test the existence of a dyadic democratic peace in the region. Also, despite the enormous wealth accumulated by some of the region's countries, economic development has not coincided with democratization in this conflict-ridden region. Is conflict in the Middle East a function of the same variables as claimed and widely validated empirically by the liberal peace argument on a global basis? If not, why? Are the oil-dependent and 'rentier-economies' the reason for this Middle East exceptionalism? Does high military spending correlate with conflict? Can religion be an explanatory factor? The political culture approach advocates that fundamental features in Islamic and Middle Eastern culture explains the lack of liberalization and democratization in the Middle East. In an attempt to shed some light on these intriguing questions, this paper compares the correlates of conflict in the Middle East with global ones.

The paper analyzes both interstate and intrastate conflict in the period 1989-1999. The paper starts with a brief review of the literature structured around the six independent variables. All variables are theorized to affect both interstate and intrastate conflict, albeit not in the same manner. After the brief theoretical discussion, the paper goes on to present the methodology and describe the data. Simple bivariate and multivariate analysis is then used to test if the correlates of conflict in the Middle East differ from the global trends, and if so, how much explanatory power the traditional liberal peace variables; democracy, economic development and trade; in addition to the variables of Muslims being the religious majority, oil export dependence and military expenditures have. In conclusion, I comments on the findings, and present suggestions for further research.

2. Theory

Conflict has been a formative part of world history, cultures and societies, and a research topic for generations of academics world-wide. The underlying forces behind and the triggers of armed international and domestic conflict are many and complex. The reasons and dynamics behind these are complex, and must be analyzed on a least three levels: systemic,

dyadic, and national. The literature on conflict is abundant, and only a short list of the main causes and triggers are provided here: economic development and performance; type of political regime; urbanization, unemployment and large youth cohorts; ethnic dominance and competition; conflict tradition; political conflict; territorial conflict; military centrality; environmental scarcity.

Liberal peace theory basically argues that open economies, high levels of economic development and democracy are factors contributing to a more peaceful world. Theory on interstate conflict has been taken from the dyadic level (“two democratic states are very unlikely to fight each other”), to the national level (“democracies are inherently more peaceful”) and culminates in a systemic argument (“a world with more democracies is more peaceful”) (Hegre and Gleditsch 1997, 283). Advanced statistical methods used on huge datasets have exposed the liberal peace argument to scrutinized testing on every level, and from most angles. The results have long pointed to conclusive empirical evidence for the dyad-level, less conclusive for the national, and somewhat inconclusive for the systemic level.

The relationship between civil conflict and regimetype takes a curvilinear form, with authoritarian and democratic regimes being almost equally peaceful, and regimes in-between these two categories the most conflict-ridden. However, Hegre et al. (2001: 1) concludes that "The democratic civil peace is not only more just than the autocratic peace but also more stable."

Outside the academic realm—in the real world—democratization and liberalization has been high up on the agenda. Since 1974 a ‘third wave’ of democratization has swept over Southern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and most lately Eastern Europe (Huntington 1991). In addition, political and economic liberalism won a decisive victory with the ending of the Cold War. Dismissed as pure propaganda in the Cold War context, advocacy for political and economic liberalism has gained a dominant, normative position at the world stage of politics. Democracy and economic growth are today seen as the main ingredients in a recipe for a peaceful world.

The liberal peace argument claims to be a global one, and includes no regional or cultural reservations. The Middle East region challenges the basic requisites of the liberal peace. The region has seen some movement towards more liberal governments (Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, Morocco), but no ‘wave of democratization’ as seen in other regions. Some Middle Eastern countries have high levels of development (at least if measured as GNP pr. capita), but enjoys low levels of democracy and peace. This makes the Middle East a particular interesting ‘case’. Little work has been done on the Middle East within in the liberal

peace tradition, and this needs investigation. This paper looks into if and how the Middle East differs from the rest of the world in its conflict correlates.

Using theory and empirical findings from the liberal peace literature as a starting point, the theory discussion is structured around its main explanatory variables, namely regime-type, economic development and trade. The discussion is then taking Middle East features into account, by also bringing in contributions from literature on rentier states, resource dependence, religion and military expenditures.

While interstate and civil conflict have very different origins and dynamics, this paper does not discuss the two types of conflict separately. Rather, the theoretical discussion is structured around the six variables chosen, and when the variable is believed to have a different impact on interstate conflict, than intrastate conflict, this is outlined.

2.1. Regime-type

The theoretical origin of the liberal peace goes back to 1795, and Immanuel Kant's classic international relations theory work "Perpetual Peace" which discusses how peace can be achieved and maintained. Kant stipulates three 'definitive articles' of peace which in today's world can be likened to democratic, liberal regimes ('republican, civil constitution'); an international, democratic security regime ('federation of free states'), and international law ('cosmopolitan right').

In addition to the much celebrated work of Kant, important theoretical material for the liberal peace is found in William Godwin, Thomas Paine and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writings. Common to all of them are that they postulate today's empirical finding of a democratic peace.

In the mid-1980s the ideas and concepts advanced by Kant experienced a resurgence in international relations theory. The contemporary liberal peace revival was initiated by Michael W. Doyle who with his articles "*Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs* (1983) and "*Liberalism and World Politics*" (1986), sparked new theoretical and empirical research on the conditions for peace, and the role of liberalism and democracy in world politics. Doyle argues:

Liberalism does leave a coherent legacy on foreign affairs...Liberal states are different. They are indeed peaceful, yet they are also prone to make war... Liberal states have created a separate peace...and have also discovered liberal reasons for aggression. (1986, 1151-2).

Doyle rejects an alternative explanation for the democratic peace:

...neither the logic of the balance of power nor the logic of international hegemony explains the separate peace maintained for more than 150 years among states sharing one particular form of governance—liberal principles and institutions.” (1986, 1157).

Another modern contributor to the liberal peace argument is Bruce M. Russett. In *Grasping the democratic peace* (1993), Russett structures his ‘democracy leads to peace’ argument along two main lines: cultural and structural explanations. First, Russett argues that ‘democracy’ is a political culture where norms, values, and practices are informed by an inherently non-violent ideology which predisposes democracies to be peaceful towards each other. Non-violent conflict resolution techniques are valued and lethal use of weapon discouraged. (Russett 1993, 31.) Structurally, democracies incorporate mechanisms and institutions which also disfavor the trigger-happy segment amongst policy makers, since a system of checks and balances with open and regular elections limit the powers of the executive branch, and make politicians dependent on the will of the public. Maoz and Russett’s 1992 study asserts that no other third variable can explain the empirical relationship between democracy and peace. Hegre et al. (2001) show that not only do democratic regimes never go to war against each other, but also that democratic regimes are internally more peaceful than semidemocracies, and more stable than both semidemocratic and authoritarian regimes. Regimes that end up in the middle, either because they are in transition from one type to the other, or because the regime is a hybrid embodying both democratic and authoritarian elements, are the most conflict-prone.

Democracy is thus the main building block in the liberal peace theory. No other single component enjoys the explanatory power of democracy in the analysis of conflict. However, the liberal peace tradition moved away from being just a political argument (democratic peace), to include economic variables and aspects such as level of development and trade (liberal peace.) This doesn’t mean that democracy has lost its central place. It just means, as is natural, that the “key to perpetual peace does not lie with one single factor, but in a complex web of things.” (Gates, Knutsen and Moses 1996, 3.)

The combination of democracy and Middle Eastern regimes is virtually non-existent. Diamond et al.’s study of democratization in developing countries, excluded the Arab world in their analysis: “the Islamic countries in the Middle East and North Africa generally lack much previous democratic experience, and appear to have little prospects of transition to even semi-democracy.” (1989: xx). Can the lack of democracy explain any variance in conflict in the Middle East?

The liberal peace from an interstate conflict view shows conclusive evidence on the dyad-level. Democracies do not fight. It is theorized that the greater number of democracies in the international state system, the lower the risk of interstate conflict. However, for civil conflict, regime-type is hypothesized to have a curvilinear effect on civil conflict (Gleditsch and Hegre, 1997.) Democratic regimes are expected to experience less frustration among its citizens, but might experience lower levels of conflict because they allow for the expression of discontent. In contrast, authoritarian regimes might provide many reasons for frustration, but experience low levels of conflict because opposition and expressions of discontent are not allowed. For opposite reasons, authoritarian and democratic regimes are theorized to be equally stable. Consequently, the most conflict-prone regimes are those in the middle category.

2.2. *Economic development and trade*

Early in the seventeenth century Eméric Crucé theorized that societies would be better off if they diminished the role of the warrior-class, and allowed for domination by the commercial classes. The merchants, Crucé argued, created more productive and wealthier societies. In addition, increased trade would reduce the misunderstandings between peoples and societies through increased interaction, and eliminate many sources of conflict. Also Kant emphasized the inherently peaceful effects of international economic interaction.

For the *spirit of commerce* sooner or later takes hold of every people, and it cannot exist side by side with war. And of all the powers (and means) at the disposal of the power of the state, *financial power* can probably be relied on most. Thus states find themselves compelled to promote the noble cause of peace, though not exactly from motives of morality. (1795, 114. Emphasis in original.)

This thinking is in line with many Enlightenment thinkers who wrote on the link between trade and peace. Prior to Kant, Montesquieu wrote in his *Spirit of the Laws* (1748) that “The natural effect of commerce is to bring about peace.”

Jeremy Bentham, David Ricardo, and Richard Cobden of the *Manchester School of ‘Commercial Liberalism’* followed in Adam Smith’s footsteps, and argued that war is too high of a price to pay (Blainey 1988). Their claims have been empirically supported by studies of Polachek (1980, 1992, 1994), Domke (1988) Gasiorowski (1986), Polachek and McDonald (1992), Hegre (1998). Economic development reduces class-conflict and cover more of peoples’ basic needs, and thus reduces the reasons for revolt.

Trade is an essential element of economic development is trade, but trade is also theorized to reduce the likelihood of war due the costs of the breaking down of trade relations. Armed conflict makes trading more difficult, and undesired loss of income is the result. (Russett 1993; Doyle 1983, 1986; Hibbs 1973.) One should also not underestimate the increased contact between different societies and cultures that trade brings about might result in increased inter-cultural understanding, and reduced risk of misunderstandings. Trade and high levels of development, provide better living conditions, higher interdependence and are believed to be essential in reducing the risk of conflict, both internally and internationally.

2.4. *Military expenditures*

A strong military sector is anathema to democratic values, and not an indicator of a peace-oriented society. The Middle East is a highly militarized region. Can high military expenditure explain some of the variance in the lack of peace? The amount of money spent on maintaining external and internal security is a powerful indicator of the stability and peacefulness of the country. “The situation is particularly distressing from the viewpoint of democracy when the military arm of the state, the armed forces, is politically dominant.” (Hadenius 1992, 138). An army’s access to effective means of coercion (trained soldiers and arms), its ability to administrate through its centralized, hierarchic and disciplined system and its strong socialization-function gives it the opportunity to develop itself—over time—into a state in the state.

Gause argues that heavy emphasis on war preparation concentrates power, makes it easier to stigmatize and oppress opposition forces and gives the state greater control over the economy and allows for the building of large coercive institutions. (1995, 285-6) .

Noreng interprets the high military spending in the Middle East in the following way:

The persistent priority given to military expenditure and internal security over civilian tasks can be seen as an indicator of the rulers’ fears of each other and of their own population, of the need to back their power with military means, and, not last, the effect of foreign manipulation. (1997, 2).

High military expenditures are also not conducive to productive economies: both people and money are bound up in activities whose sole purpose is to maintain order and stability. Hadenius’ data show that the correlation between democracy and high military expenditure is strong and significant (-0.43) and explains 18.2% of the variance in democracy. He thus concludes that “large armed forces ...have an adverse effect on democracy” (1992, 141).

A high amount of national budget spent on the armed forces does not indicate a belief in the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and should therefore be negatively connected both to peace, and democracy.

2.5. *Rentier economies and resource dependence*

Another striking feature of several Middle East countries is oil-wealth. How does oil play into the peace and democracy equation? Literature on the ‘rentier-states’ argues that commodity concentration and foreign aid creates authoritarian regimes, unproductive economies, and lazy citizens (Beblawi & Luciani 1987; Karl 1997; Crystall 1990.) The main source of rent in the Middle East is oil-exports. How much explanatory power does reliance on oil-export have?

The rentier-concept is a powerful analytical tool for explaining the peculiar economic and political structures in the region. But is oil-dependency really the only variable explaining Middle East exceptionalism, and if so, how much?

Dependence on one commodity and its revenue—rent—affects the producing country in many ways. Marshall (1920, 350) defines rent as “income derived from the gift of nature.” A rentier economy is defined by Beblawi and Luciani as an “...economy substantially supported by expenditure from the state, while the state is supported from rent accruing from abroad” (1987, 11). Most Arab oil-producers are ‘rentier states,’ and this peculiar kind of economy affects the development of the state and its political and social structures. Oil seems to produce a patterned response in countries in which it constitutes the major share of state revenue. Already patriarchic, oil has created even more authoritarian regimes in the Middle East by leaving control of the enormous revenues in the hands of a few. Competing and dissident voices can easily be bought off. The populations as a whole are provided with extensive social services, and pay little or no taxes in return. With the basic needs met by a generous welfare state, and with little more than demands for quietness and loyalty in return, the populations are politically inactive, obedient and loyal to its rulers.

Jill Crystal (1990) analyzes the formation and changes of the political, social and economic structures in Kuwait and Qatar, and demonstrates how oil has eliminated the merchant class, and has left the rulers with no political opponents:

The rulers exacted a price for their economic largess—political quiescence. In both states the transition to oil was accomplished through a tacit arrangement between the ruler and the trading families, a trade of formal power for wealth. In exchange for receiving a sizable portion of oil revenues, the merchants renounced their historical claim to participate in decision-making (1990, 9).

Even though oil has created enormous wealth for its producers, their economies are not diverse and remain heavily dependent on oil. As long as there is plentiful oil to be pumped out of the ground and the price for oil is stable and high, this is OK, but when markets fluctuate and the wells eventually are emptied, serious problems emerge for the ruling elite. Brynen et al. (1995, 15) argues that a

“...narrow base of the economy (centered on the petroleum and public sectors) deprives most societal actors any degree of economic leverage vis-à-vis the state. Society is atomized into individual rent- and reward seekers, and the development of the autonomous institutions of civil society is severely stunted”

Hadenius includes commodity concentration in his study as one of four measures of dependency and finds a significant negative correlation (-0.42) between commodity concentration and democracy. In Hadenius study, the commodity concentration variable explains 17.7% of the variance in level of democracy (Hadenius 1990, 94-95).

Collier and Hoeffler provides an additional perspective on natural resources and conflict. While the rhetoric of conflict centers around grievance and suffering, Collier and Hoeffler concludes that “greed considerably outperforms grievance” as a cause for civil war (2001: 1). The existence of natural resources provide potential income generating sources for rebel groups, which can extract taxes on goods being transported through their area, or more plainly take control over the production of the natural resource. Regardless of the groups’ objective suffering and legitimate complaints, unless rebel groups are financially viable, they can not fight.

In the international system, oil-rich countries are tempting targets for hostile neighbors, and international powerbrokers seeking to secure uninterrupted and moderately priced supply of an essential commodity. This papers operates with only one variable on resources dependence, namely oil-export. Oil is hypothesized to be negatively correlated with democracy, and also negatively correlated with international as well as domestic peace.

2.6. Religion

Democracy arose from a specific geographic and cultural setting. Can democratic values be transferred across cultural boarders? Some scholars argue that Islamic doctrine is inherently anti-democratic, and stress the authoritarian heritage and nature of Islamic societies (Kedourie 1994). Are countries where Muslims constitute the largest religious group less democratic and less peaceful?

I do not review the literature on religion and peace here. As far as I know, there are few, if any at all, quantitative studies published on the relationship between conflict and religion.

The literature on the relationship between democracy and religion is theoretically elaborated and empirically tested (Hadenius 1992, Huntington 1984 and 1991, Weber 1958.) Therefore, I enter religion in the model as an intervening variable affecting the regime-type directly, and the dependent variable, peace, indirectly.

Societal and structural consequences of religion was emphasized by the German sociologist Max Weber. In *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber theorizes that both capitalism and democratic leanings are unintended by-products of an ethic particular to Protestantism. Firstly, Protestant beliefs, ideals and actions were conducive to economic development and capitalism due to its emphasis on hard work and pietism. According to Protestant doctrine, the fruits of success were not supposed to be used on luxury products and indulgence, but rather be reinvested. Secondly, the Protestant faith emphasizes individual responsibility for salvation. Also, skepticism towards and a history of rebellion against authority are elements conducive to democracy.

The 1960s saw a renaissance of Weber's and the old "national character" school with Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture* (1963) which argues that particular values and attitudes could be attributed to people in a society, and that certain attitudes and habits are crucial in developing democracy. The study received a lot of criticism based on its methodology, and the political culture paradigm faded during the 1970s and 1980s. Today, Hudson makes a case for carefully bringing political culture back into political science. "Political culture—especially as a single factor—is not likely to "explain" dependent variables as general as stability, democracy, or authoritarianism. But it might help explain why certain institutions (such as legislatures) function as they do" (1995, 64).

Does the positive connection between Christianity and democracy exclude other cultures from developing democracy? Kennan argues that democracy "...evolved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in northwestern Europe [and has]...a relatively narrow base both in time and space; and the evidence has yet to be produced that it is the natural form of rule for peoples outside those narrow perimeters." (1977, 41-43).

The Middle East is a region dominated by Islam. It is also a region with very few democratic regimes. Is there a connection between these two observations? Whether it is Islam itself or certain aspects of Islam emphasized by rulers to justify their authoritarian regimes which cause the current lack of democracy in Muslim-dominated states is an

important one. The association between Islam and authoritarianism is apparent and striking, but the reason behind this is controversial and unproven. Most certainly, the link between Islam and authoritarianism is not causal. Participatory strands within Islam exists, and so do Islamic liberalism, and secular states where Muslims constitute a religious majority.

However, the scholarly debate and empirical research includes religion as an important variable, and politicians and rulers manipulate and use religion as a political tool. I include religion in my analysis both because the theory exists and empirical research includes it. However, only data on religion, and not culture, was available.

On the theoretical level, scholars argue for both the inherent authoritarian nature of both Islamic and Arabic culture. This study only tests incorporates the Islamic aspect of the political culture argument—mainly because it is easier to measure. Along the lines of Kennan’s argument, some claim that Islam is inherently incompatible with democracy: “...the idea of democracy is quite alien to the mind-set of Islam” (Kedourie 1994, 1). Huntington argues that “cultures that are consumatory in character—that is, where intermediate and ultimate ends are closely connected—seem to be less favorable to democracy” (1984, 208). Other argue that important elements of Islamic doctrine and tradition (such as the doctrine of ‘din wa dawla’—no separation between state and religion; the insistence on divine law and superiority; the suppression of women and other minorities; emphasis on order and obedience) are incompatible with democracy. (Pipes 1983, 144-147, Zubaida 1987, 31, Mozaffari 1987).

Brynen et al. summarize the middle-ground arguments in the political culture debate on democracy in the Arab world: “Political culture has considerable utility as an explanatory variable, but only if it is dealt with in nuanced way...both authoritarian *and* participatory strands exist within the political culture of the region, with the latter expressed in Islamic principles of *shura*” (emphasis in original, 1995, 7). Anderson dismisses the political culture argument all together: “...the nature of political regimes in the Arab world, like those elsewhere in the world, can best be understood as reflections of the political economy of the countries in question, particularly the character of their integration into the world economy.” (1995, 78).

Some empirical research has been conducted on this topic, and the results indicate support for the association between Protestantism/ Christianity and democracy, but not for the negative link between Islam and democracy (Hadenius 1992, Huntington 1984 and 1991). “In the category where Christianity predominates, the degree of democracy clearly exceeds the average for the third world as a whole, while the Muslim countries fall far short of this level.”

Hadenius finds a significant relationship between Protestants and democracy (1992:120). However, he did not verify the opposite finding for Islam. When controlling for socio-economic status “the negative connection for Islam is then reduced to a low, insignificant level” (1992, 121).

Democracy is, in addition to its political structure, also a ‘mind-set’ emphasizing compromise and peaceful conflict resolution. Ideologies, cultures and religions based on this foundation, are more likely to be conducive to democracy. Based on both earlier theoretical work and empirical evidence, I include religion—measured as Muslims are/are not largest religious group, and Christians are/are not largest religious group—to test the relationship, and check for intervening variables such as economic development and trade.

Based on the brief theoretical discussion above, I derive the following hypotheses:

Regime-type:

- H1a: There is a negative relationship between democratic regimes and interstate conflict
- H1b: Semi-democratic regimes are more likely to be involved in armed domestic conflict

Economic development:

- H2a: Countries with higher levels of economic development are less likely to be involved in interstate conflict
- H2b: Countries with higher levels of economic development is less likely to experience intrastate conflict

Trade:

- H3a: Countries that trade extensively are less likely to be involved in interstate conflict
- H3b: Countries that trade extensively are less likely to be involved in intrastate conflict

Religion:

- H4: Countries where Christians are the majority are not associated with conflict
- H5: Countries where Muslims are the majority are associated with conflict

Oil-export:

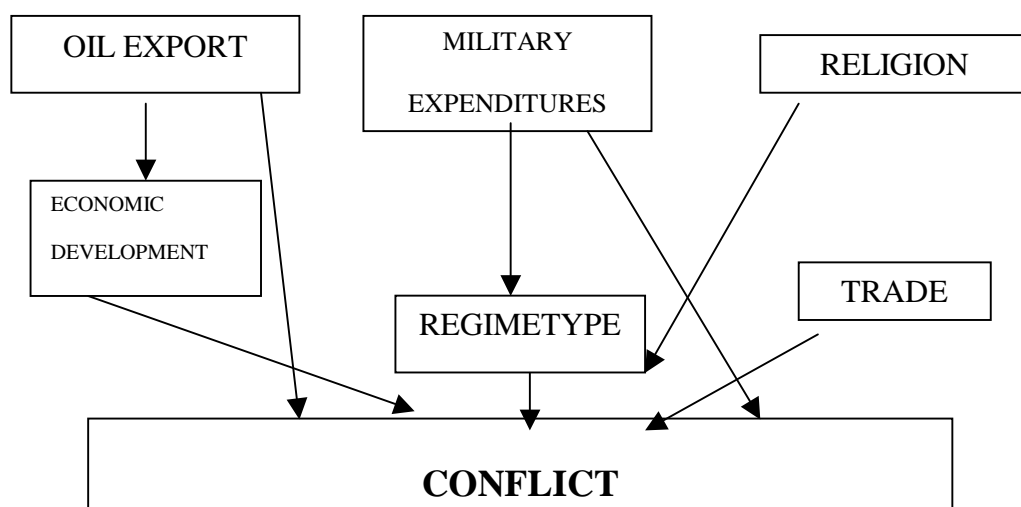
- H6a: Oil-exporting countries are negatively correlated to peace
- H6b: Oil-exporting countries are negatively correlated to democracy

Military expenditures:

- H7: High military expenditures are positively related to conflict.

The hypotheses are presented visually in model 1.

Model 1: Correlates of Interstate and Intrastate Conflict



3. Data

The study comprises 161 states as units of analysis, and investigates the relationship between conflict in the 1989-1998 period, and the states' 'score' on regime-type, GNP per capita, trade, military expenditures, oil-export and Muslim/Christian as dominant religious group in 1990. The tests are conducted on two data sets; one on the Middle East and North Africa region¹, the other globally. A separate analysis of international and domestic armed conflict is conducted.

Some states have been created and have gained independence after 1990. In the case where conflict has occurred in a country that gained independence after 1990, conflict is reported as have taken place in the country of origin. This means that i.e. all wars in the Balkans and the former Soviet Republics are reported as have taken place in Yugoslavia and USSR respectively.

3.1. The dependent variable

The dependent variables are interstate and intrastate conflict, and are taken from the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (Wallensten & Sollenberg 1999.) From 1989 to 1998 there were 108 armed conflicts in 73 places in the world, of which seven took place between states.² Armed

¹ There is no standard definition of the Middle East. Based on geography, culture and religion, I refer to the Middle East as the following 19 countries: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

² A state is defined as "an internationally recognized sovereign government controlling a specified territory, or an internationally unrecognized government controlling a specified territory whose sovereignty is not disputed

conflict is defined as a “contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.” (Wallensten & Sollenberg 1999, 605.)

Armed conflict is divided into three categories,³ but this paper operates with only one level.

The dependent variable is a dummy-variable: no armed conflict (0), armed conflict (1).

Separate analyses for interstate and intrastate armed conflict are conducted.

3.2. The independent variables

Based on the discussion of the literature and prior empirical research, I have chosen six variables that I include in the analysis. The selected variables are central conditions for peace, and the analysis undertaken in this thesis will determine their direction, strength and inter-relatedness. The author explore these variables, and hopes to shed some light on the intriguing and complex paths to peace, as well on how the Middle East might fit into—or not—the liberal peace argument.

3.2.1. Democracy

Democracy is the central variable in the liberal peace model as democratic regimes are thought to be more peaceful than their authoritarian counterparts. The Polity III Project has generated indexes for institutionalized democracy and institutionalized autocracy for all independent states with population over 500,000 in the period 1800-1994. (Jagers & Gurr 1995.) The index is created in the basis of characteristics such as competitiveness in political participation and executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment and the position of the chief executive. Level of democracy and autocracy varies from 0 (least) to 10 (most).

Following Hegre and Gleditsch (1997), I derived three variables from the two original ones: a 21-point scale (-10 to 10), a dichotomous (-10 to 2 = autocracies (0), 3 to 10 = democracies (1)), and a tri-chotomous (-10 to -6 = autocracies (0), -5 to 5 = semi-democracies (1) and, 6 to 10 = democracies (2)), to be used the bivariate analysis. The multivariate analysis uses a

by another internationally recognized sovereign government previously controlling the same territory.” (1999, 605.)

³ Minor armed conflict: the number of battle-related deaths during the course of the conflict is below 1,000. Intermediate armed conflict: more than 1,000 battle-related deaths recorded during the course of the conflict, but fewer than 1,000 in any given year. War: more than 1,000 battle-related deaths in any given year. (Wallensten and Sollenberg 1998, 595.)

squared term to account for the hypothesized curvilinear effect of regime-type (Hegre et. al, 2001.)

3.2.2. Economic development

The level of economic development can be measured in numerous ways, and common measurements are energy consumption per capita, level of education and GNP per capita. The Human Development Index (HDI) compiled by the United Nations Development Programme includes GDP per capita, longevity and educational level and is a more extensive indicator of the level of economic development and modernization, and might have been more appropriate than using only GNP per capita. I chose to operationalize economic development only as GNP per capita, mainly because data was easily accessible and reliable. The HDI index has few data from 1990, since the creation of the index is fairly new, and using this index would have given poor results.

Numbers on GNP per capita were taken from World Development Report, and supplemented with information from the World Military Expenditures and Arm Transfers, 1998 for countries WDR did not provide information on.⁴ GNP per capita is reported in current (1990) U.S. dollars. In the bivariate analyses economies are classified according to World Development Report's own categorization: low-income (\$80-\$600), middle-income (\$601-\$2480), upper-middle-income (\$2481-\$9500) and upper-income (\$9501-highest). In some cases the exact amount of GNP pr. capita had not been stated, but the countries had been classified as belonging to one of the four categories. In the multivariate analysis, the natural logarithm of GNP per capita was used instead of the original one.

3.2.3. Trade

The data on trade was collected from Penn World Tables 5.5, and is defined as the percentage of export and import of GDP. The variable was grouped into low (0-25%), medium (25,1-50%), high (50,1-75%), and very high (75,1% - highest). Trade could not be included in the logistical regression because information for many countries were missing.

⁴ Cuba, Barbados, Belize, Nicaragua, Guyana, Surinam, Luxembourg, Malta, Albania, Cyprus, Russia (USSR), Iceland, Cape Verde, Sao tome & Principe, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Djibouti, Angola, Namibia, Libya, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Mongolia, Taiwan North Korea and Fiji.

3.2.4. Military expenditure

Military expenditure as percentage of GNP was found in World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfer, 1998. The units of analysis were categorized as very low (0-2%), low (2,1-4%), medium (4,1-6%), high (6,1% and higher) in the bivariate analyses.

3.2.5. Crude oil export

The reliance on oil export and its centrality to the countries' economies is measured by crude petroleum export as percentage of total export. The source was Handbook of International Trade and Development Statistics, 1996-1997. Countries were grouped into four: none (0%), low (0,1-10%), medium (10,1-50%) and high (50,1% and over.)

A second, dichotomous variable measuring dependence on oil was collected due to the lack of results when using the original one. A dichotomous variable was believed to get rid of countries which did not depend oil enough to make any structural impact.

3.2.6. Religion

Religion is a nominal variable if the options are given as: which religious group do you belong to, and can not be included in advanced statistical analysis. By creating several dichotomous variables, we avoid the methodological problem. Religion is introduced to the analysis using two dummy-variables measuring whether Muslims or Christians constitute the major religious group in the country or not. (0=not majority, 1=majority). The data was taken from Tanja Ellingsen's data set (2000).

3.3 *Statistical problems and restrictions*

In this first study, I use a cross-section analysis only. The independent variables are taken from one year only, 1990, while the dependent variable is armed conflict in the period 1989-1998. The year 1990 was picked because the indicators of democracy and autocracy were not available for later years when I started collecting the data. Also, choosing data from a year early in the period makes 'logical' sense compared to choosing a later year because one would argue that 'Based on their situation in 1990, countries with so-and-so characteristics were more or less likely to experience conflict throughout the period.' Also, it is not unreasonable to argue that 1990 is an indicator of each country's situation in the entire period where conflict is measured if countries' scores do not fluctuate widely from one year to another. A more extensive testing of the relationships using time-series and more advanced statistical methods are left for a later project.

Most independent variables' values are from 1990. Some exceptions were made⁵ to ensure a higher number of cases represented. Although it is not the ideal solution, I believe the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. This is especially true for crude oil export where seven large oil-producers (of which four in the Middle East) would have been left out if I had adhered strictly to numbers from 1990. The danger in choosing to make these exceptions is of course that the numbers do not represent the country's situation vis-a-vis the other countries in 1990, and this represents a weakness in the data. However, the number of cases are relatively few (25), and I believe that they are not misleading.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Bivariate relationships

A table of the simple relationship between the variables is presented in table 1, and gives an overview of the relationships before we prepare for the multivariate analysis.

Table 1. Summary of bivariate relationships

Interstate conflict:	Global	Significance	MENA	Significance
Regime (trichotomous)	0.000	1.000	1.000	0.300
Regime (dichotomous)	-0.119	0.693	1.000	0.379
GNP per capita	0.000	1.000	0.862	0.100
Trade	-0.444	0.075	*	*
Muslim majority	0.382	0.251	-	-
Christian majority	-0.079	0.787	-	-
Crude oil export	0.531	0.055	1.000	0.100
Military spending	0.193	0.422	1.000	0.125
Intrastate conflict:				
Regime (trichotomous)	-0.269	0.051	0.692	0.052
Regime (dichotomous)	-0.368	0.026	1.000	0.109
GNP per capita	-0.513	0.000	-0.662	0.021
Trade	-0.443	0.001	-1.000	0.000
Muslim majority	0.360	0.056	-	-
Christian majority	-0.344	0.031	-	-
Crude oil export	0.181	0.284	-0.418	0.185
Military spending	0.098	0.454	-0.761	0.009

*Could not be computed due to the lack of trade data for the MENA sample
 - not a meaningful variable in this region

⁵ *Crude oil export*: Congo (1995), Gabon (1996), Iran (1980), Iraq (1980), Nigeria (1980), United Arab Emirates (1989) and Yemen (1995). *Military expenditures*:⁵ Burma (1991), Cambodia (1991), Cape Verde (1991), Zaire (1992), Equatorial Guinea (1994), Guinea-Bissau (1992), North Korea (1991), Laos (1992), Libya (1991), Mali (1992), Niger (1991), Qatar (1991), Sao Tome & Principe (1994), Syria (1991), Trinidad and Tobago (1992), Albania (1991) and Barbados (1992). *GNP*: North Korea (1991.)

None of the bivariate relationships were significant at the .05 level for interstate conflict. Due to the small numbers of international conflict, this is not surprising. Accepting a slightly higher significance level (.076), trade emerges as a fairly strong (-.444) variable that reduces the propensity for conflict. A crude-oil export correlation of .531 with conflict, suggests that having oil is risky.

For intrastate conflict, democratic regimes are negatively, but moderately, correlated (-.368) with conflict globally, but positively and strongly correlated (.692) with conflict in the Middle East. Turkey and Israel are the only two democratic regimes in the region, and they have both experienced domestic conflict. GNP per capita and trade operates as hypothesized both globally and in the Middle East region, but do not emerge as very strong variables. Globally, countries where Christians constitute the majority are moderately and negatively (-.344) associated with armed conflict, while countries with a Muslim majority are moderately conflict prone.

4.2. Multivariate analysis of interstate and intrastate conflict: logistic regression

Multivariate analysis allows for the simultaneous testing of each independent variable's partial contribution to the dependent variable when all the other independent variables are held constant. Logistic regression is an appropriate multivariate technique when the dependent variable is dichotomous (conflict/ no conflict) and skewed (Helland 1999.) In the logistic regression, I model each type of conflict as a function of the same set of independent variables.

Some of the variables used in the logistic regression differ slightly from the ones used in the cross-tabs: Instead of GNP per capita, I use the natural logarithm of GNP per capita. The original variable was very unequally distributed. In addition, this change better reflects the fact that changes for countries belonging to the lower part of the scale have larger impact than on the top. An increase of \$500 means much more for people in Zimbabwe than to people in Norway. Regime-type was squared (runs on scale from 0-100 instead of - 10 to 10.) This was done because numerous studies have shown democracy to have a curvilinear effect on internal conflicts (Hegre et al. 2001.)

I include two analyses with a different coding of the importance of oil to the economy. "Oil-export 100" is a continuous variable, while the dummy variable "Oil-export2" was created because there seems to be some kind of threshold effect as to how important oil is to the economy. The dummy variable is coded as oil being (1) or not being (0) an important

export commodity as defined by the leading Norwegian encyclopedia (Aschehoug & Gyldendahl, 1999.)

Interstate and intrastate conflict are modeled to be a result of the same variables, working in the same direction with the exception of regime-type which is modeled to have a curve-linear effect for intrastate conflict. Trade could not be included in the analysis because of too many missing values.

Conflict is presented as a product of the following equation:

$$Z = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7$$

Where β_0 is a constant and:

$$Z = \ln(p/(1-p)),$$

X_1 = Regime-type,

X_2 = Regime-type squared,

X_3 = Economic development (log),

X_4 = Crude oil export OR oil as an important export commodity,

X_5 = Military expenditures,

X_6 = Muslims are religious majority (dummy-variable),

X_7 = Christians are religious majority (dummy-variable).

Regime-type squared is of importance to intrastate conflict, since regime-type has demonstrated a curve-linear effect. First, I execute a separate logistic regression for both types of conflict, and then I run an analysis of both conflict-types in the end. The results of the regression with the above parameters are expressed in tables 2 to 6. Multicollinearity (high correlation between independent variables) is a general problem in multivariate regression analysis, but does not seem to be a problem in my data-sets.

4.2.1. Interstate conflict

The logistic regression on interstate conflict shows that three variables are significant: oil export, economic development and military expenditure. However, only oil export reveals a high odds-ratio: oil-exporting countries are 4.6 times more likely to participate in international conflict than non-oil exporters. Countries with a GNP per capita of $X+1$ have less than half the chance of experience war than countries with the value of X . Military expenditure significantly increases the likelihood for international armed conflict.

Table 2: Interstate conflict (global), logistic regression.

	Beta Coeff.	St.Error	Significance	Odds-Ratio
Regime-type	.11	.06	.076	1.11
Regime-type squared	-.01	.01	.306	0.99
GNP per capita (log)	-.78	.37	.034	0.46
Oil-export (2)	1.53	.73	.037	4.60
Military expenditure	.08	.04	.055	1.08
Muslim majority	1.77	1.26	.162	5.84
Christian majority	1.50	1.19	.209	4.47
Constant	1.37	2.34	.556	
N	130			

N=130. -2Log Likelihood=64.927. Chi-square=15.113, df=7, significance=0.0346. The numbers are rounded off to display two decimals, with the exception of significance, which displays three decimals.

Interstate conflict for MENA could not be computed because there were too many missing datapoints. The models Chi-square is significant for seven degrees of freedom.

The second analysis for interstate conflict uses the scale oil variable, and reduces the odds-ratio and significance of oil export while military expenditure is almost not longer significant. -2LL increases, and indicates that a continuous oil variable has less explanatory value than the dichotomous variable. Economic development continues to be a strong variable.

Table 3: Interstate conflict 2 (global), logistic regression.

	Beta Coeff.	St.Error	Significance	Odds-Ratio
Regime-type	.02	.01	.075	1.02
Regime-type squared	-.01	.01	.361	.99
GNP per capita (log)	-.71	.35	.041	.49
Oil-export (100)	-.12	.06	.057	1.13
Military expenditure	0.06	.04	.172	1.06
Muslim majority	1.36	1.23	.268	3.90
Christian majority	1.08	1.18	.360	2.95
Constant	1.58	2.32	.499	
N	130			

N=130. -2Log Likelihood=66.575. Chi-square=13.464, df=7, Significance=0.062. The numbers are rounded off to two decimals, except for significance which displays three decimals. The model's Chi-square is not significant.

Overall, interstate conflict does not—with this set of explanatory variables and for this comparatively short time—yield many significant results. The only hypothesis that is confirmed repeatedly is the positive relationship between high level of economic development and peace. Narrowing the logistic regression down to the MENA dataset (including only 19 countries) was not a fruitful exercise, and yielding no.

4.2.2. Intrastate conflict

For intrastate conflict, both regime variables and economic development are significant for the global data-set, while no significant findings were found for the Middle East. However, none of the finding for the global dataset displayed high odds-ratio.

Table 4: Intrastate conflict (global), logistic regression.

	Beta Coeff.	St. Error	Significance	Odds-Ratio
Regime	0,08	0,04	0,035	1,09
Regime squared	-0,03	0,01	0,001	0,97
GNP per capita (log)	-0,72	0,21	0,001	0,49
Oil-export (2)	0,63	0,46	0,172	1,87
Military expenditure	0,08	0,05	0,120	1,09
Muslim majority	0,74	0,62	0,233	2,10
Christian majority	0,50	0,57	0,382	1,64
Constant	5,44	1,47	0,000	
N	130			

N=130. -2Log Likelihood=136.835. Chi-square=40.883, df=7, significance=0.000. The numbers are rounded off to two decimals, except for significance which displays three decimals. The model's Chi-square is significant for seven degrees of freedom.

Table 5: Intrastate conflict (MENA), logistic regression.

	Beta Coeff.	St. Error	Significance	Odds-Ratio
Regime	1.45	1.58	0.358	4.28
Regime squared	0.06	0.14	0.661	1.06
GNP per capita (log)	-2.02	1.29	0.116	0.13
Oil-export	2.08	2.18	0.340	7.97
Military expenditure	0.10	0.10	0.322	1.10
Constant	18.47	11.28	0.102	
N	18			

N=16. -2Log Likelihood=9..389. Chi-square=15.341. df=5. Significance=0.009. The numbers are rounded off to two decimals, except for significance which displays three decimals. The model's Chi-square is significant for five degrees of freedom.

The dichotomous variable for oil export does not seem to have much effect. The -2LL for Middle East and North Africa is much lower than in the previous tables, and indicates a better fit between theory and model. However, none of the results were significant. Regime-type and oil-exports show high odds-ratios, but are not significant.

Table 6: Intrastate conflict 2 (global), logistic regression.

	Beta Coeff.	St. Error	Significance	Odds-Ratio
Regime	.10	.04	.017	1.10
Regime squared	-.03	.01	.001	.97
GNP per capita (log)	-.76	.22	.001	.47
Oil-export (100)	.02	.01	.063	1.02
Military expenditure	.07	.06	.228	1.07
Muslim majority	.45	.65	.482	1.57
Christian majority	.27	.59	.648	1.31
Constant	6.04	1.55	.000	
N	130			

N=130. -2Log Likelihood=134.992. Chi-square=42.726. df=7. significance=0.000. The numbers are rounded off to two decimals, except for significance which displays three decimals. The model's Chi-square is significant for five degrees of freedom.

No results for MENA were available due to missing values. With a continuous oil-export variable, the results are not improved. GNP per capita continues to display the highest beta-coefficient and a high odds-ratio on a significant level.

4.5. Summary of logistic regression analysis

The multivariate analysis supports some of my hypotheses. Complete testing of the Middle East conflict correlates proved to be difficult, due to missing datapoints. Economic development as measured by level of GNP per capita strongly and consistently reduced the likelihood for any kind of armed conflict, globally as well as in the Middle East. Oil export strongly increased the chance for involvement in interstate conflict globally, but not significantly in the Middle East and North Africa. Regimetype did not seem to have a strong and significant effect.

5. Conclusion

A testing of the liberal peace argument in the Middle East and comparing it with global trends in a post-Cold War era, did not reveal a lot of unexpected findings.

For international conflict, the results were few partly due to the fact that a low number of cases of interstate conflict were reported in the period 1989-99. Among the few significant findings for interstate conflict, the Middle East did not differ much from the rest of the world with oil exporting countries being more involved in conflict. High economic development reduces the likelihood for conflict globally, but was not significant in the Middle East and North Africa.

For domestic conflict, more data was available and more findings were significant. On a global basis, democratic regimes are more peaceful than both semi-democracies and

autocracies. In the Middle East and North Africa, no results were significant in the logistic regression, but the bivariate relationships revealed that Middle Eastern democracies (Israel and Turkey) more than other democracies are struggling with internal conflict. The Middle Eastern democracies are some of the most conflict-ridden democracies in the world, and this affects the analysis of democracy in the entire region. Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories remains a unique conflict in the world, and a more thorough analysis is definitely needed.

Economic development shows a positive correlation for both data sets, and indicates that prosperity is a key variable in peace building. In the bivariate analysis, trade reduces the likelihood for domestic conflict for both data sets.

Military spending has a clear negative impact on conflict in the Middle East and North Africa. Cross-tabulation between military spending and wealth indicates that the rich Middle Eastern states and the oil exporters spend a lot of money securing their regimes. No such relationship was found globally, and this illustrates the conflict potential in the volatile Middle East and North Africa region. In the Middle East, oil-export is heavily correlated with authoritarian regimes. Also, oil-wealth accounts for the high level of economic development in the region.

For the global data set, the association between religion and regime-type was very strong. While countries where Christians constitute the majority were positively associated with democracy, Islamic societies show a clear, negative association. When controlling for level of economic development however, these differences disappeared. A controversial topic, Islam's relationship to democracy requires a much more thorough commentary than which is possible in this paper.

My approach to the study of conflict correlates in the Middle East and North Africa might not have been the most fruitful one. Using a 10-year period without a longitudinal approach gave very few significant findings due to the small number of observations. Thus, using a longer period or including each year in the period to also check for growth and change might yield more significant results.

The use of quantitative methods provides overview, a high degree of certainty in the conclusions reached, and makes generalization about the research subject possible. The flip side of the coin is the rigidity of the research design. Moreover, the process requires careful planning of each stage, and thus offers a less flexible approach than qualitative methods. Within a limited timeframe, new data that might yield more interesting results, can not be collected, and the researcher is thus stuck with hypotheses and data he or she thought would

be useful in the beginning, but whose adjustment might be more relevant. The study of conflict thus requires both quantitative and a qualitative research. In this case, a useful approach would have been to compare case studies of interstate and intrastate conflict. The use of both methods allow for the best way to prescribe the unique mixture of global, institutional remedies that each conflict-settlement and reconstruction of a conflict-torn area needs. It also can account for the unique dynamics of each particular conflict.

The correlates of conflict in the MENA region compare with the global ones in that economic development strongly and significantly reduces participation in international as well as domestic conflict. They contrast in that democracy (in the bivariate analysis) is not conducive to intrastate peace in the region. Israel and Turkey have been and are still involved in violent, domestic political conflicts. On the dyadic level, parts of the liberal peace argument in the Middle East holds true; Turkey and Israel are not at war, and are in fact cooperating. Is this a Kantian separate, liberal peace emerging?

The domination of authoritarian regimes in the region is, as postulated by Middle East scholars, related to oil wealth and military expenditure. Some claim that it is also intertwined with Islamic and Middle Eastern culture. The results of the testing of the data in this thesis show that this association is mostly due to economic development. However, even though most Islamic societies are authoritarian, in the Middle East as well as globally, this does not mean that Islam is incompatible with political liberalism. A participatory strand exists in Islam, as well do Islamic liberalism. Political culture is dynamic, and there is always the potential for change (Shukri 1995.)

The liberal peace argument claims that it has a global prescription for peace. Democratic regimes and economic development are theorized and empirically proven to be effective medication for curing reasons for armed conflict. However, in the Middle East, economic development has so far been positively correlated with peace, but the region remains an authoritarian stronghold. There is some movement toward economic as well as political liberalization, but no democratization wave to talk about. Nevertheless, democracy is emerging as a normative favorite, or as a legitimizing cover, and many Middle Eastern countries seem to at least pay lip service to democratic ideals. The small Gulf states of Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain are moving towards somewhat more representative systems. However, most Middle Eastern regimes hold “elections” where the favorite has gained 99.99 % of the votes, and where the government controls the electoral process. The lack of competitive and representative political parties and continuously repressive governments makes democracy a weak plant struggling to grow in unfertile Middle Eastern soil.

Yet, even though democracy did not emerge as a strong variable in my findings in the region, there is reason to believe that the region will benefit from political liberalization. The Arab-Israeli conflict has overshadowed and played a negative, formative role in regional politics for five decades. The ending of this conflict, combined with the need for reform of Arab economies, will dramatically impact the regions developments, politically and economically. A central future issue for many Middle Eastern countries is the legitimacy of the incumbent regimes. The removal of the Arab-Israeli conflict from the political agenda in the region may remove opposition to Zionism as a major ideological prop for some regimes and could shift the focus to other imminent problems. In this respect, Abi-Aad and Grenon' list of sources for conflict is long and worth noting:

The different factors of instability and sources of conflict faced by the states of the Middle East are broadly comparable, and include the autocratic nature of the regimes and the struggle for power, interstate ideological cleavages, military antagonisms and race, ambition and structure of armed forces, sectarian minorities and religious rivalry, ethnic heterogeneity and minorities, border disputes, disparity in economic development, social impact of economic constraints, divergence in petroleum politics, struggles over water, demographic explosion, disparity in economic growth, and troubles caused by foreign labour migration, internal flight and flows of refugees. (1997, 10.)

There is little doubt that the Middle East has the potential and most probably will continue to be a volatile region. However, the conflicts of the future will differ from those of the past, which is why the liberal peace argument seems to be so important and relevant to the region's future. There is little reason to believe that the Middle East should not continue to be an exception to the liberal peace argument, since the reasons why the Middle East plays an exceptional role in international politics are still present. Oil will continue to be an essential part of world politics, but it will play a lesser role than in the 1970s. The Israelis will not be cast into the sea and will continue to play their peculiar role in regional, international and domestic American politics. Oil prices will continue to fluctuate and structural changes are inevitable.

However, some new trends are emerging. The Arab world is slowly integrating into the world economy, and cooperation-agreements such as EUROMED and membership in the World Trade Organization are on the agenda. The increased emphasis on international law and moral standards in the post-Cold War international community will more likely than not be to the benefit for the region. Calls for democracy will still not drown out the calls for stable oil-prices, but they will move higher up on the agenda. Russett argues that the replacement of Cold War containment with an agenda of democracy building is the best U.S. foreign policy (Russett 1998, 249).

The benefits of more accountable, if not democratic, Middle Eastern regimes are obvious: First, more liberal and democratic Arab regimes' political decision-making will certainly differ from the ones of today. Muslih and Norton (1991) argues that if Arab regimes had been less authoritarian, the Iran-Iraq and the Kuwait wars might been avoided all together... Regional confrontation and conflict have far too often been initiated to take focus away from internal problems, and used to enhance national unity in divided Arab nations. The democratization of Arab regimes might also change Israeli perceptions and reduce her security concerns, as well as change inter-Arab cooperation. Also, liberalization of Middle Eastern political systems would provide channels for public debate and protest. As a consequence, Arab states would, eventually, emerge as less fragile, and more trustworthy partners in peace. Finally, along with political liberalization and regional détente, the enormous amount of money spent on military equipment, could be spent on social and economical investment. This would be to the benefit of most Arab citizens, albeit not for international weapons producers. If democratization in the Arab world takes place, and this in turn leads to economic development and reduces the level of conflict in the region, the liberal peace argument will emerge stronger than ever...

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